DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 419 CE 083 178

AUTHOR	Sommer, Finn M.; Olesen, Henning Salling; Andersen, Anders Siig
TITLE	Organisational Legionnaires or Life Artists. The Shop Steward: Past and Future.
PUB DATE	1996-00-00
NOTE	11p.; In: Adult Education and the Labour Market II: Papers from the Seminar of the ESREA (European Society for Research into the Education of Adults) Research Network (2nd, Strobl, Austria, June 1995).
AVAILABLE FROM	Roskilde University Press, Postbox 260, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark (Papers not sold individually, for complete volume: ISBN-87-7349-309-0, ISSN-1395-6833, $10). E-mail: kac@ruc.dk.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; Education Work Relationship; Educational Change; Educational History; *Educational Needs; Employer Employee Relationship; Employment Practices; *Employment Qualifications; Foreign Countries; Industrial Training; *Labor Education; Learning Processes; Needs Assessment; Postsecondary Education; Relevance (Education); Skill Development; Supervisors; *Supervisory Training; Training Methods; *Unions
IDENTIFIERS	*Denmark; *Shop Stewards

ABSTRACT

In Denmark, the institution of shop steward was established in 1900. Until World War II, shop stewards' main functions were to recruit new trade union members and check whether labor agreements were being observed. After World War II, Denmark's shop stewards began having to deal with increasingly complicated and "technical" questions. The training of shop stewards became a matter of mutual interest for employers and trade unions. In the early 1970s, an education and training fund was established to support systematizing shop steward training. Over time, shop stewards were expected to perform many new tasks that required technical skills and know-how far exceeding those developed in existing forms of shop steward education and training. The following are just some of the qualifications that shop stewards must develop and for which systematized training and education is required: understanding collective bargaining and other agreements; recognizing conflict and coincidence of interests and using that knowledge in negotiations; reading selectively, processing information, and communicating clearly; formulating short- and long-term interests and motivating colleagues to address them; organizing meetings and activities; placing specific events and conditions in broader social and historical contexts; and analyzing the political content in specific questions. (MN)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 478 419

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

H. Salling Olesen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Finn M. Sommer
Henning Salling Olesen [1]
Anders Siig Andersen

ORGANISATIONAL LEGIONNAIRES OR LIFE ARTISTS
THE SHOP STEWARD: PAST AND FUTURE

To be printed in a book edited by Harry Coenen, Utrecht, in the *Internationale Arbeitskreis Arbeit - Wissenschaft - Bildung* (International Work Group Labour - Science - Education) published also by Akademie für Arbeit und Politik 1996.

This paper originates in a large-scale survey of the internal training system of the Danish Trade Union Movement (FIU) which we carried out between 1989 and 1993. A preliminary presentation of the results of this research are to be found in a report entitled *En oplevelse for livet*[1], sections of which are available in English translation. For us the most important perspective has been to consider the training of shop stewards as part of the trade union movement's *process of renewal*. In the following we present the background for the investigation: the historical development of shop steward functions, present-day qualification requirements which the individual shop steward should be able to deal with, and a profile of the challenges that the trade union movement is facing. For an account of how the training system actually functions, reference is made to other sources (Andersen et al 1993, Olesen 1992).

Although this investigation is based on conditions in Denmark, it may also be of more wide-ranging interest.

The article refers to the situation in Denmark and Scandinavia.. As is probably well-known, the Danish labour market is highly organised with approximately 80% of all wage earners unionized and with collective bargaining in almost all areas of work. This is not merely the case in industry; it applies equally to public functions, private service, agriculture etc. Since large-scale unemployment (once more) began to develop from the beginning of the 70s, there has been a further growth in the formal labour market, not least because large groups of women are insured and unionized.

The labour market is basically founded on agreements between employers' and

wage earners' organisations. Legislation in this area is sparse: it is framework legislation which is fleshed out by the organisations. (This applies, for instance, to the labour court and to regulation of the working environment.) The major basic agreement of the labour market and standards for regulation of conflicts were established as early as 1899.

Closely linked to the trade union movement is the (historically) strong Social Democratic Party which, apart from the decade between 1983 and 1993, has by and large been the party of Government since 1929. In relation to the situation in Central Europe, it is a feature in Denmark that religious movements have never been of any organisational or institutional importance in the Trade Union Movement.

1. The development of the Trade Union Movement as a learning process

The structure and activities of the trade union movement are the results of a collective process of learning (cf. Jørgensen and Ibsen 1979, Weber 1922). This took place by means of struggles for interests during the development of capitalism, and it cannot be measured by the yardstick either of abstract models of organisation and democratic ideals (as in the theory of organisational sociology), or by certain pre-conceived notions about the revolutionary abolition of capitalism and wage labour (as is the custom among certain sections of the revolutionary left). It should, to a high degree, be critically assessed on the basis of its own inner contradictions and its ability to develop democracy and self-determination.

A significant, critical tradition in trade union theory points to the contradiction between the functions of the trade union as "the force of law and order or the counterforce" (cf. e.g. Schmidt 1976). It is a precondition for controlling the sale of labour by insisting on collective bargaining that the unionized workers are able to present a united front. There neither was nor is any room for digressions and individual interests in an organisation fit for struggle and collective bargaining. In order to be a counterforce in basic economic relations one must be the force of law and order in one's own lines. The whole organisational form and internal democracy of the trade union movement is built up around the *ability to bargain collectively*, which also includes the ability to control the actions of individual members centrally. The organisational culture which stems from this is characterised by formalised structures, concerted action and the requirement of uniformity. Collectivism is the result of a mutual feeling of obligation vis à vis each others' needs and interests, but it is equally part of disciplining. This presents a democratic organisation with a genuine dilemma. Where (right of centre) organisation sociology and research concerning democracy understands this as an internal state of lack - the creation of an elite, oligarchy - we understand it as a contradiction determined by the trade union's societal task. Although this explains the dilemma, it does not remove it. It rather defines it as an historically given cause of conflict which must be understood and further developed by the trade union movement itself. If this does not succeed, it will become a barrier to the

development of the movement.

Trade unions are a *necessary* form of organisation in a capitalist society: if they are not present, wage labourers cannot reproduce themselves. If one has any doubts about this type of necessity, one merely has to look at the developing countries which are in a period of transition towards a capitalist social formation. "Reproducing oneself" is not an entity that is fixed for all time. It is a process of development or civilisation where the needs of wage labourers develop from mere physical survival to an increasingly more complex human development and ever greater freedom. For this reason, trade union organisation is a *cultural production process in itself*. Within this framework there is a collective learning process about society, forms of organisation for behaving within it are developed as are self-awareness and hope for a better society.

These basic theoretical definitions of the trade union concept form a necessary frame for an historical and qualitative understanding of the context within which trade union education and training takes place. The development in (wage) labour, the development in the institutionalised labour market, and the collective learning process of wage labour where the future is formulated are the decisive framework conditions. It is also here that the criteria for relevant training must be found.

2. The shop steward institution in the post-war period

The great changes in the relations between employers and employees after World War Two constitute an important background for the development of trade union movement training. This primarily occurs in the scope and content of trade union work/activity at the level of the workplace. Up to then this mainly consisted in:

- recruiting new members to the trade union and ensuring support for trade union demands at collective bargaining etc.
- checking whether the agreements were observed and, if necessary, going to the labour court.

The institution of shop steward was established in Denmark as long ago as 1900 in the iron industry. However, it is far more recent in other areas, in particular in small firms. Furthermore, it is a very young phenomenon in the public sector. In all areas, including industry, there has been great development of content and intensity in the co-operation between employers and staff.

The decisive characteristic of the institution of shop steward is a recognition, enshrined in the agreements, of the right of the workers to elect their shop steward and the shop steward's obligation to work for co-operation with the company. In addition to this there is protection against wrongful dismissal.

The 1947 agreement about establishing works councils was the start of a new epoch in co-operation at the work place. The employers pledged to brief the works councils about all important matters concerning economy and the market. In the 1950s and 1960s trade union representatives at all levels from the Parliament to the shop floor were actively engaged in the dynamic development of an industrial society. Naturally, the traditional tasks concerning rules and organisation were still

present. But technical innovation, wages systems that promoted productivity, and training of industrial workers in bottle-neck areas in the metal industry and building and construction, were carried out in a process of co-operation where shop stewards and trade union staff had tasks to perform that far exceeded these traditional assignments. They had to deal with more complicated and more "technical" questions, not least new wages systems.

Against this background the development of the shop steward institution and the training of shop stewards became a matter of mutual interest for employers and trade unions. At the beginning of the 70s this resulted in the creation of a fund, the "Education and Training Fund", into which a small, fixed, sum of money is paid for every work hour. The fund is managed by the labour market parties together; 4/5 of the money paid out is spent on shop steward training and the remainder for the employers' organisation training. This fund has provided the economic support for systematising shop steward training and is regularly increased. At the moment approximately DKK 250 million (DEM 65 million) is paid out each year, and this probably covers about half of the total training activities in the organisations - to be compared with a membership of approximately 1.5 million in the Danish Federation of Trade Unions.

There has not been very much research in Denmark on co-operation and shop stewards. In the early 1960s, the National Institute of Social Research carried out an investigation of the shop steward institution in industry, first in 1961 and with a follow-up in 1966. This research revealed, inter alia, that the tasks performed by the shop stewards were rapidly increasing in number, and that the following types of tasks were of growing importance (Horneman Møller 1969):

- wages systems that promote productivity
- questions of production technology (which included safety!)
- welfare
- personal counselling and assistance

It showed (not surprisingly) that most shop stewards had a modest educational background. 80% had only had seven years in the primary school. Some (40%) had participated in courses or study circles before being elected shop steward, but a great number had no educational experience whatever, apart from their primary school experience which was often negative.

In addition to this an interesting aspect concerning the role of the shop steward became apparent: the workers thought that the shop steward was *their* representative and should achieve improvements in wages and working conditions. The more active the workers were, the greater were their demands for loyalty and orientation towards their own interests.

That is to say that they still saw the shop steward from the point of view of the workers' collective. The shop stewards themselves, on the other hand, saw themselves as easing co-operation, just like the employers and managers.

A closer study of the conception of the efficiency of the shop stewards (Hornemann Møller 1970), describes the expectations of the role of the shop stewards from

different sides in two dimensions:

	Party oriented	
Trade union oriented	versus	Worker oriented
	Co-operation oriented	

The study shows that shop stewards, managers and top management are in greatest agreement concerning their expectations: they are to the right in the first dimension (towards the workers' side) and in the middle of the other. The expectations of the trade union people are a little more co-operation oriented and much more trade union oriented. The expectations of the workers are both more worker oriented and more party oriented.

However, the research also shows something about the same parties' assessment of the shop stewards' effectiveness: the assessment of the shop stewards and the management is often similar while the trade union and the workers often reach the opposite conclusion.

The trade union and the workers regard the shop steward as effective in cases where s/he has many tasks to perform, spends a lot of time on them, has a close relationship to the workers and where there is a strong workers' collective in the company.

The shop steward is often assessed as effective in companies with a high level of social integration (unity and affiliation to the company), and at companies where the shop stewards function for long periods. There does not necessarily seem to be any contradiction between a strong workers' collective and a structure of co-operation with management, where there is also room for the shop steward.

Interpreting such investigations poses a number of methodological problems. But in sum the shop steward would seem to be placed as an integrated factor in the well-functioning company where the field of interest between management and workers is explicit and well-organised. In other companies there is a great risk that the shop steward will be assessed as less effective and placed in a conflict of loyalties in relation to his/her base and trade union.

On a number of points, the investigation indicates the development that trade union representation was undergoing and the dilemmas this gave rise to:

- new and varied tasks with corresponding technical requirements as to qualifications, making many demands on the shop steward concerning overview and integrity
- different role expectations and a tendency towards being split off from the workers' collective, in particular at companies where unity between the workers is weak.

New needs for systematic training education

At the same time, the expansion of the welfare state, the growth in consumption and the dissolution of traditional workers' milieus meant that the basic class cultural framework of orientation was undermined. This took place by means of vigorous geographical mobility, through moving out - especially from the capital city - and in the form of expansion of social and cultural life addressed to "citizens" in general, instead of to a socially and culturally delimited group. The development of the mass media must not be forgotten in this context.

The fixed base of legitimation that lies in the concept of *shop steward*, which has its roots in the workers' collective at the workplace and in an entrenchment of workers outside of the workplace, became less a matter of course. The shop steward was now elected if s/he could produce results and make them visible.

Several different but connected needs for training followed from this development. The shop stewards should have technical skills and know-how in relation to the many new tasks and had to learn to deal with a complex work situation. But the development also created the need for trade-union-political schooling and communication in a more systematic form. This was schooling as regards views and political education among the elected representatives and in broader groups of members.

The existing forms of education and training had a hard time living up to these needs. In the wake of the general de-politicisation of cultural and leisure life, interest

in political and trade-union topics in the evening schools was falling, relatively at any rate. Subjects having to do with political education and trade unions or society had become a dwindling part of the great supermarket offered by Arbejdernes Oplysnings Forbund -AOF- (the Workers' Educational Association in Denmark)[2]. There were many who found that AOF had not done enough about strictly trade union schooling. Both AOF and other parts of the workers' movement tried to cover current needs, but often reactively and short-sightedly, for instance courses in wages systems. There was no coherent course of education and training.

Dissatisfaction and frustration at training activities up to this, which may have overlooked the development tendencies that lay behind them, formed the background for the establishment of a new system of education and training for shop stewards (Olesen 1985).

In spite of the intention stated in a report from the trade union movement entitled *"Vor uddannelse" (Our education)* (1973) to extend the training offered by the trade union movement to a broad education for members, from the very beginning the Internal Training system was justified and defined as a training system for taking care of the functions of the trade union organisations.

This choice, on the one hand, prioritizes a *target group* - the elected representatives or the officers employed.

The question is whether it also prioritizes the *objective*, so that the need for technical qualification for trade union work is prioritized rather than the work of political

and trade union education? These are problems which continue to haunt the further development of the system.

3. The challenges of every day - Qualification demands in shop steward work

3.1 The tasks of the shop steward

As described above, the tasks of the shop steward are steadily increasing in number. This development is due to three changes which, in principle, are different.

- Because co-operation functions and management strategies on the company level have been extended, the shop steward has been drawn into the day-to-day organisation of worker and company management to a greater extent.
- Changes in the system of collective bargaining and wages systems have shifted a lot of competence from the central wage negotiations to the local level.
- The development of the consciousness of interests to include new areas (such as the working environment, work injuries, technology, and education and training), has meant that the scope of the working area has grown rapidly.

Under all circumstances there are great differences between the task profiles at small and large companies, places of work with and without a workplace branch, the different areas of collective bargaining (normal wage/minimum wage) and the function in the private and the public sector. However, there are some basic features that can be identified as relatively broadly applicable to the tasks of the shop steward and they can be summarised as follows[3]:

- to monitor the observance of collective bargaining and other agreement: and to deal with doubts and complaints directly with management or in the labour court;
- to negotiate and enter into local agreements on wages systems and determining pay in the area of minimum wages;
- to represent the interests of the staff in the works council and in all areas of interest where the staff are not ensured any formalised influence;
- to function as the link between management and staff, to communicate information, to regulate conflicts;
- to function as the link between management and trade union - both ways;
- to contribute to organising the staff at the place of work and to raising the level of trade union activity;
- to help colleagues/members with their personal, social and practical problems (counsellor, big brother/sister, social welfare worker);

- to take part in the workplace's/company's contact with the rest of the society (the local community, politicians, the public) - sometimes together with management.

Some quite specific requirements as to qualifications can be described in connection with each of these tasks. They are quite comprehensive in themselves.

These requirements must be met if the tasks of the shop steward are to be carried out, even though the individual points will vary in importance from the one workplace to the other.

However, it is not sufficient to fulfil these specific requirements. At the same time as one shoulders the specific tasks, irrespective of one's own personal qualifications and wishes, one takes over a set of roles and some potential for conflict which to a certain extent are pre-determined.

3.2 Potential for conflict in the shop steward function

Some of the potential for conflict - but only some - in the situation of the shop steward, is inherent in the function itself. The shop steward's function has been characterised by *role contradictions*, cf. Hornemann Møller 1970. Different parties expect something different of the shop steward. These role contradictions are apparent, inter alia, in the rules for shop stewards, as they must *help co-operation in the company while at the same time representing the interests of the workers*. Although these two aspects often coincide, this is not always the case. The shop steward must not only be able to deal with the strain involved in these role requirements; s/he must also be able to see when they are in conflict with each other and be able to have a clear profile in relation to all parties in everyday life.

We have described it as a categorical contradiction in the trade union, that on the one hand it must *represent the economic and working interests of the workers under capitalism, and on the other hand their interest in abolishing wage labour*. Taking care of workers' interests at the company level is primarily an expression of the first of these aspects. The concept of *reproduction interests* characterises both the range and the limitations of these interests. On the one hand it is a matter of *getting as much in wages as possible for the least possible effort*. But it is also a matter of *conserving one's labour, that is safety, working environment and maintenance of qualifications*. Finally, it is also a matter of *quality of work*. Wage earners' reproduction interests cannot be taken care of without co-operation with management; but painful experience has shown that they often cannot be taken care of *by means of* this co-operation. Dismissals, work injuries and wearing down of the workforce all chip away at these reproduction interests.

However, this split is not caused by the shop steward regulations. It is caused by the capitalist economy of which management and workers are a part, even with the most worker-friendly management and even with the most interest-conscious shop steward.

This leads to the other aspect of trade union work - the struggle against wage labour. In the work of the shop steward, this aspect can be expressed in two ways:

firstly, as a general politicisation of problems at the workplace - they are also all aspects of the political economy of society; and secondly as demands for co-determination. In everyday work and under the conditions given, the shop steward must at all times be able to formulate demands concerning *increased co-determination and to contribute to colleagues' consciousness of the limitations on shop stewards and their possibilities for action.*

This means that in his or her person and the way s/he does the job, the shop steward is obliged to bear all the basic contradictions of society and to contribute to helping colleagues to understand them.

In addition to this the position of the shop steward in the organisation of the trade union is full of contradictions. He/she has *left the workers' collective of the workplace.* The workers' collective is an informal organisational reality consisting in the staff as a collective carrying out a function of work control and organisation side by side with the formal organisation of management, foreman etc. The workers' collective is a *counterforce* which primarily protects the staff from the random and divisive exercise of the right of management to lead, by setting norms for work and service etc. A shop steward cannot function without representing this collective[4].

On some important points the basis of interest of the workers' collective is identical with that of management and owners, because the competitive position of the company and its conditions of production form the framework for employment, the wages cake and working conditions. But it is precisely in this merging of interests that the interests of the workers' collective are in latent conflict with the common interest and solidarity of the trade union. In the first place there are often genuine conflicts of interest between the staff of a company and other workers (in the line of industry, among the unemployed, in other lines of industry). In the second place, making common cause against the individual capitalist in the competitive struggle, in political lobbying etc., means *cutting off* the aspect of the trade union function which is the struggle against wage labour as such.

In the workplace, the shop steward is first and foremost his or her colleagues' representative. But he/she is also the trade union's link to the company. In Germany this contradiction is very clear because it is embodied in two different kinds of representative for the same employee. The "Betriebsrat" institution is the legal representation for the staff in the management of the company with somewhat wider powers than the Danish works council. "Vertrauens-Leute", shop stewards, are trade union representatives with no mandate to negotiate with management, while the members of the Betriebsrat do not have to be organised! The Danish shop steward institution unites these two aspects which means that shop stewards must be able to deal with the contradictions when carrying out their functions.

The institutionalisation of the labour market and its juridical regulation constitute the form in which the basic interests of the workers are taken care of. This forms the objective basis for an organisation which is *regulation oriented and top-down controlled.* At the same time the raison d'etre of the organisation is that it is a *democratic mouthpiece for wage labourers and that they always basically feel that it is legitimate* (also when they, for instance, do not agree with specific decisions and

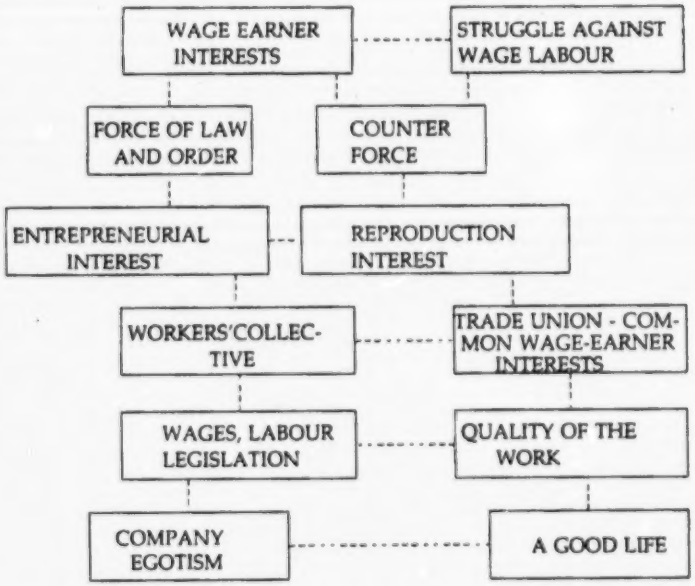
6 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

strategies). The shop steward must stick to the rules, explain the rules to colleagues, convince them of the necessity of observing them while simultaneously loyally promoting colleagues' ideas and feeling of what is right and reasonable.

In addition to this is the fact that the wage-earner interests which the shop steward has to try to represent in this field of societal and organisational contradictions contain in themselves some genuine dilemmas. Some contradictions are inherent in the reproduction interest between *maximising immediate income and prioritising the working environment safety, the quality of the work, long-term qualification etc.* Given the conditions of ownership and management that exist at present, in reality one can only disclaim responsibility for the company's economy and development, while simultaneously wishing to extend co-determination and to influence the qualitative conditions for the work (technology, product development, work organisation).

We have attempted to group some main points in the minefield where the shop steward has to function in a diagram of key words. The diagram can be regarded as a picture of the enormous demands for analysis, clarification as to opinion and political and human competence which the shop steward function makes of those who practice it.

Each layer in the model constitutes a field of contradictions to which the trade union and the shop steward have to relate. *The trade union movement must at one and the same time be able to fill roles and take care of interests which are in conflict with each other.* This in itself makes demands concerning the ability to orient and to deal with conflicts. *Between* the layers the conflict and the roles are displaced: although there is a connection between prioritising and short-term wages interests, loyalty to the workers' collective and entrepenurial interests, there is no parallelism. Likewise there is a connection between prioritising long-term considerations for the quality of the work with loyalty to the trade union or class; however, it happens quite often that the shop steward experiences contradiction between the trade union and the quality of the work (for instance discussions about working hours, wages systems etc.). This involves not merely being able to deal with the individual fields of conflict and being able to find one's way around in them; it also requires being able to explain and communicate these relations to others.



3.3 Requirements concerning the qualifications of the shop steward

On the basis of the description of the tasks of the shop steward and the potential for conflict inherent in the function, we shall outline the ideal requirements concerning the qualification of a shop steward.

They include the following:

- knowing the basic structure of the collective bargain and other agreements and being able to assess their importance in specific conditions;
- having knowledge of rules of procedure and principles of labour law, and being skilled at getting precise information concerning interpretations, precedent etc.;
- being clearly able to see interests, conflicts and coincidence of interests and using this knowledge in constructive negotiation;
- having clear opinions - which includes being able to formulate one's doubts - and being able to convince others of one's personal integrity;
- being able to read selectively, process information and communicate it in a clear and appetizing manner;
- being able to understand and have sympathy for one's colleagues' experiences and wishes and being open to different persons and points of view;
- being able to formulate short and long-term interests and motivating one's colleagues to help to take care of them;
- being able to explain and personally accept the necessity of collective organisation;
- being able to organise meetings, debates, practical activities;
- being able to conduct a personal conversation, shift perspective and take on a leading role vis à vis colleagues who are looking for help for one thing or the other;
- being able to place specific events and current conditions in a broader social and historical context and communicating this context to others;
- being able to analyse the political content in specific single questions and converting this into strategic initiatives.

Taking on the job of shop steward means that some of the ordinary wage-earner problems are intensified: the relationship of work-family-public life is a collection of complementary and competing demands. But now the shop steward is to a greater extent in charge of or, at any rate, is responsible for, the form the relationship will take. The changes can contain deep-seated cultural and psychological conflicts: the shop steward is placed in a *life situation that is almost middle-class*. If one has a working-class identity and a working-class affiliation, this is then *strange and means a source of conflict in relation to colleagues and friends*. It also means that some built-in contradictions in this class culture, namely its intricate relationship to individual interests and needs, are made exclusively into one's own personal problem.

It is, in particular, the complexity and the potentials for conflict inherent in the total situation that are decisive.

It is obvious that any head-hunter bureau which was to find someone to fill this job would be looking for a *highly qualified executive*. They would not accept anybody with less than medium-length further education or a university graduate. But the bureau would not stop at the formal and specific qualifications: they would examine this person's analytical ability, their human and social qualifications, openness, willingness to learn, ability to lead and inspire, to deal with pressure etc. Some measure of experience from similar jobs would also be required.

There is yet another requirement: the shop steward should be and remain "one of us", and should also be "a whole person". This means being a quite ordinary person who is generally respected at the same time as being able to be personally responsible for all the points of view and roles which follow with the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

institutionalised safeguarding of interests. The shop steward should be able to deal with the "deputy" role which any staff representative position, to a greater or lesser extent, imposes on him/her, and be capable of making it into a fruitful, challenging part of relations with colleagues. Furthermore, the shop steward should also remain/be an all round active and interested person who takes part in joint activities whether they take place in associations or are grassroots initiatives or the like, and be active and interested in his/her children's conditions at kindergarten, school etc.

It is, naturally, not possible to teach people this in a course that lasts a few weeks, not even if most of the participants have spent some years in the school of life. *It is impossible to cover the qualifications required by shop stewards to even a moderate extent.* For this reason we have focused on the following questions in our analysis of the internal training system in the Danish trade union movement.

- What aspects of shop steward qualification are prioritised and what are the paradigms for action that the participants receive in relation to the demands made by the job?
- How does the training system tackle what is in principle the impossibility of acquiring sufficient knowledge and competence in all these areas?
- How is the potential for conflict dealt with which is structurally present in the shop steward function and for which key words are given in the above diagram?
- How are the connections/contradictions between the shop steward function and the whole of the participants' lives dealt with, i.e. the other aspects of their political lives, their cultural engagement in political parties, associations etc. and their family lives and leisure time?

The answers to these questions can indicate the extent to which and the way in which the training courses contribute to enhancing the shop steward's possibilities for handling the job.

4. New challenges for the trade union movement today and in the future

Even without a crystal ball, a number of new development tendencies that will radically change conditions for trade union activity can already be seen today. Some of them will restructure the tasks and conditions for work which have been listed here as being structurally associated with trade unions and the shop steward; others will make it possible - and necessary - to question the objectives and *raison d'être* of the trade union movement in a new way. It is not an easy task to list these changes point by point as they are all inter-connected. They are development tendencies whose clout and form must be very openly assessed and, on a number of points, they are tendencies on which the trade union movement itself has a considerable amount of influence [5].

Another type of change has to do with changes in the basis of the *positions of power and organisational structures* of the trade union movement. The trade union movement has just finished unionizing the public sector. It is now busy finding a way to update its formal basic structure to business structure and organisational matters within its traditional areas of collective bargains and looking after the interests of the employed. In the meantime, however, unemployment has reached a dimension and achieved such stability that competition for paid employment and relations between the employed and the unemployed have become a major problem for solidarity as far as looking after interests is concerned. New areas of employment with different working conditions and weaker organisational traditions have become far larger, both quantitatively and qualitatively (the service sector). *Solidarity and community of interests* can no longer be taken for granted. On the contrary, this development threatens to split the working population into fractions which regard themselves as being at opposite ends of the scale, as we already know in Denmark from the relationship between privately employed in industry and state employees.

In addition, technological and organisational development trends in the traditional bastion of trade unionism, industry, are in the process of removing the basis of traditional trade union positions of strength and means of power. This can be seen in the German IG Metall, an industrial union in what is largely a world market economy. Mass work disappears, production becomes network-organised over regions and national borders. The strength of the trade union stands and falls with its ability to follow up this development with demands for participatory democracy, and for qualification of wage-earner consciousness in workers who no longer stand at a conveyor belt or in a factory hall, but who have qualified and individual work. This development has not bypassed Denmark either.

In this connection, the importance of central collective bargains is weakened. Although this development has progressed far in certain areas (decentralised collective bargaining), in others it is only in its infancy. The coming years will see the framework for important questions concerning wages and working time being formulated and answered on the company level. Moreover, a number of other areas of interest which can only be dealt with locally, will become increasingly important: the environment, education and training, work organisation and technology. While the reorganisation of the formal structures of the trade union movement towards cartels or the like will provide the organisational framework for some of these workplace-related topics, it will not change the fact that they must be solved on the local level to an increasing extent.

Another type of change has to do with *new attitudes to work and trade unions*. This is often termed individualisation, which on the one hand means distancing from the collective and grouping in fixed patterns and, on the other hand, individual ambitions and expectations of one's life, including the content of one's job. This is the manifestation of what is both the dissolution of traditional class cultures and closed circuits (not just workers' culture), and what in another connection has been called cultural liberation. The single individual has fewer fixed frames but far more opportunities. Without going into it deeply, the single individual also demands more of him/herself and her/his life (Baethge, 1992).

The active members of trade unions often find this development provocative. Some experience it as decline while others interpret it as pampering and egotism. As a cultural and psychological development tendency, it can, of course, become a little of each in a political, social and working sense. The old cultures are hardly completely dead and gone; it is much more likely that within the extended space, new values and possibilities of identification are being developed which can then also express themselves in a more varied social and cultural picture [6]. To this must be added the fact that far more women have become wage earners in the formal economy instead of housewives with a job on the side, and that women's experience and the new working areas in the public service sector in particular greatly widen the horizons of working life and trade union organisation.

In the first place this means that work occupies a different place in the life of the individual. Traditional wage-earner consciousness is still there, professional pride and the like, but it is now an element in a new working identity. Women's caring responsibilities, professionalisation tendencies and salaried employees' identification with the job and the firm make their appearance. To a certain extent the companies are fishing in troubled waters with Japanisation strategies and company culture, or to put it more gently: they try to replace old-fashioned belief in authority with motivation, responsibility and a sense of belonging to the company.

What is dangerous in this connection in relation to the trade union movement is a risk of *problems of legitimacy*. The necessity of the trade union movement, the legitimacy of its basic principles, becomes less obvious. Certain aspects of its organisational culture and power base become directly repulsive.

However, *the problem of legitimacy* has another side also. The trade union movement must also be able to include new needs and problem areas in its work in order to retain its status as the organisation for wage earners' interests. We can identify four main challenges to the trade union movement here.

The first challenge has to do with the work situation itself. For the first few post-war decades of development, the interest structure was unchanged: it had mainly to do with better wages. Since then problems to do with the working environment and with pressures of work, and to a lesser extent other physical and mental factors, have been a natural part of taking care of interests. The fact that the discussion about "good work" or "work that develops" is now on the agenda is actually an expression of a significant re-structuring of the horizon of interests from modest, traditional wage-earner interest in the nature of the work itself. Wages and working time have not become irrelevant; employment and unemployment insurance even less so. But something new has been added.

The second challenge concerns social security and the welfare state. Primary looking after interests via the trade union was supplemented by a political policy of security in the form of building up the welfare state. Today the welfare state is in a critical situation which, although it may be a crisis of legitimation, may also be a genuine crisis. Part of the security system of the welfare state would seem to have unintentioned side-effects at the same time as the primary intentions have been realised to a limited extent only. The price of security has been bureaucratization and authoritarianism. There is hardly more than a small

percentage of the population who would want to abolish this welfare state. Modernisation, which would give more self-regulated and well-adapted activity, requires restructuring which nobody knows the recipe for. The welfare state is an established expression of solidarity in the common political thinking of the trade union movement. For this reason, modernising the welfare state - in order to avoid throwing the baby out with the bath water - is a central process of re-organisation for the trade union movement. In addition to this, immediate wage-earner interests and experience in relation to the specific areas of activity of the welfare state are quite contradictory if one examines workers in export-oriented private lines of industry on the one hand, and on the other, public employees in the large service sectors with no direct commercial significance (e.g. care for the elderly).

The third, great new challenge is the question of "sustainable development", or solutions to ecological problems. This also hits right at the heart of trade union thinking. Material growth is the formula for human progress and liberation. Even though political thematisation to a great extent is the question of distribution or equality, the question of the growth of the cake is still the pre-requisite for any discussion of distribution. On the local level, the utilisation of nature in the shape of consumption of resources or pollution is still an important pre-condition for production and employment. This means that it is a colossal challenge for the trade union movement to have to deal with environmental problems, energy policy and qualitative control of growth. But in reality the question must be posed on the global level. It is primarily on the global level that ecological, economic and political questions are interwoven into the very grave issue of the possibility of sustainable development and the consequences of thinking in a way that shows solidarity.

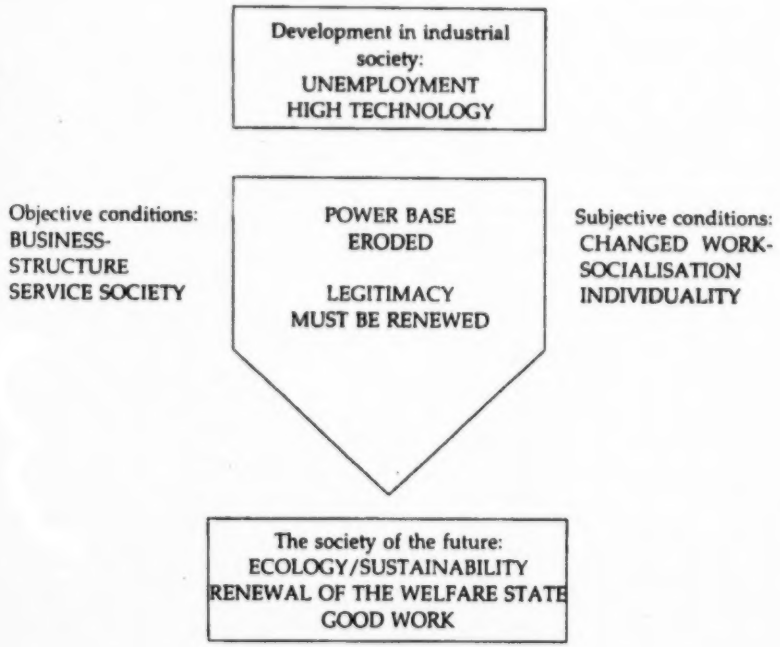
A fourth radical theme is changed gender roles and equality. The hidden ideal and pre-condition of the classic trade union objectives was to be able to support a family so that the wife could stay at home and create a worthy, secure family life. This was compatible with different kinds of supplementary work on the informal labour market. The post-war years have meant a massive change in this: women now work outside the home and have become real wage-earners. The demand for labour, the extension of the welfare state and women's own demands for an independent social life and financial independence have made the housewife who stays at home the exception rather than the rule. The full effects of this development have by no means become apparent yet. Pay is only equal in a formal sense and we are far away from equality on the labour market. Most important, the gender division of labour in the home and in the caring functions has absolutely not changed at the same rate as the appearance of women on the formal labour market. The gender cultures, and the attitudes to caring functions such as looking after children and the well-being of the family associated with an earlier epoch are still predominant, even though changes can be seen here, especially in the younger age groups. These matters concern trade union members both professionally and as processes of personal development.

Finally, let us mention relationships to strangers, whether they are "work migrants" or political refugees, or perhaps in the future, an indecipherable mixture. Up to now the trade union movement has guarded morally based openness vis à vis

foreigners. This is much more difficult in countries with many foreigners and where social problems are more intractable. In these countries this question affects the trade unions more because it is its members who feel threatened. In an integrated Europe with a south and an east with a significantly lower level of productivity but a high level of expectations, this problem will be much more difficult to tackle.

These challenges could perhaps be summarised in some points.

- Re-structuring workers' culture - individualisation
- Changed basis for the traditional positions of power and organisational structure of the trade union movement
- The 2/3 society, the struggle for wage labour, an extended concept of work
- The demand for the good life and work that develops, self-administration
- Environmental problems and a global perspective
- Equality and softening of gender roles
- The multi-ethnic society



The trade union movement must face both a *present* and a *future* - it must commit itself to both *objective* conditions and *subjective* expectations. Here it is the ability of the trade union movement to create a connection between its power base and its legitimacy which gives the movement its political mandate. If this connection is broken, then its role has been played out.

5. Education and training and learning processes

By the yardstick of international comparison, the internal training system of the Danish trade union movement is quite unique as regards scope, degree of institutionalisation and independence. Naturally, this is not without reference to the well-developed and formalised co-operation between the parties on the labour market and the central level of organisation. In itself the development of this co-operation has increased the need for systematic qualification of shop stewards at many levels while simultaneously ensuring the necessary organisational and financial basis for it to take place. It may be said that this system of education and training is both a historically specific product of special Danish industrial relations and an important factor in their further development. When the form and content of the regulation of the labour market and taking care of interests undergo drastic change, the training of shop stewards is crucial to the trade union movement maintaining its positions of strength. At the same time this is one of the places where the ability of the trade union movement to develop new objectives and give new meaning to the concept of solidarity is tested.

There is a built-in contradiction in the intentions of this system of education and training. Whereas it was in principle intended for all trade union members, in practice it was organised for shop stewards.

However, the investigation shows that almost all participants are active shop stewards and their participation is closely connected with their trade union careers. This means that the system is actually for officials rather than for the general trade union membership. On the other hand it is it not a systematic basic qualification for positions of trust in the trade union. Those who participate by no means follow the path indicated through the system.

The most certain result of this comprehensive education and training is that it cements loyalty to the organisation and creates an extremely intense feeling of community and of belonging. The participants are very satisfied with the programme; in particular when are asked during the residential courses they are often very enthusiastic. Most of them emphasise the informal social intercourse with other participants - is this where the most important learning and exchange of experiences take place? - and highly appreciate meeting participants from other unions and working areas. This special course culture clearly promotes consciousness of the unitary trade union movement at a relatively decentralised level, often crossing contradictory interests and tactical struggles between the leaders of the individual unions. On the other hand this is a consensus-oriented culture to a very high degree. The training system is an extremely contradictory but dynamic factor in the trade union movement. It is these contradictions and this

dynamism that we have illustrated in the course of our investigation.

This raises the question of the role of education and training in the trade union movement. Should it be a mechanism for organisational loyalty and for ensuring that all functions at the decentralised level are carried out competently and in accordance with centrally determined policy and strategy for solutions? Or should it rather be an independent structure which creates a public structure that includes the genuine experience and problems of the participants (and of other members), thematizes conflicts and is thus part of a policy producing layer in the organisation? Today education and training are quite certainly important organisational integration factors. If they develop features of a public structure to a higher degree, on the one hand they will naturally challenge the existing organisational structure, its power pyramids and its formal comprehension of democracy. However, on the other hand they will also contribute to developing the tasks of the trade union movement and creating inner strength by means of effective communication between members' experience and the organisations' formulation of policy.

NOTES

1. Anders Siig Andersen, Finn M. Sommer, Henning Salling Olesen and Kirsten Weber, **En oplevelse for livet**, nr. 15 in the Publication series of the Adult Education Research Group of Roskilde University, Roskilde University 1993. Parts of this investigation have been translated into English as "An experience for life: an evaluation of Internal Training in the Danish Trade Union Movement", Roskilde University 1993. The investigation forms the basis of three Ph.D. dissertations, which have the character of evaluation research with many complementary aspects (pedagogical, sociology of education, sociology of organisation). It is both critical feedback to the trade union movement and its teachers and a case study in organisational education.

2. Arbejdernes Oplysnings Forbund (Workers' Educational Association in Denmark) was founded in 1924 as an institution for popular educational activity. AOF is the largest educational association in Denmark: in their free time, approximately 10% of the adult population attend classes, lectures etc. which are arranged by AOF, and several thousand participate in longer courses of education and training.

3. Compiled from Hornemann Møller, 1970, Jørgensen & Ibsen, 1979, and Colbjørnsen et al, 1981. As these three sources see the tasks from different sides, they pay attention to different aspects. Hornemann Møller concentrates on the communicative aspect of the shop steward's work and describes his/her tasks on this basis. Jørgensen & Ibsen take their point of departure in taking care of interests. Colbjørnsen et al, who are dealing with Norwegian conditions which are not necessarily exactly similar to conditions in Denmark, examine the tasks of the shop steward/workplace branch from the perspective of an organisational sociological description of the company.

4. The workers' collective is an industrial phenomenon which at one and the same time exists in contradiction to the formal organisation and fulfils some necessary technical-organisational functions in it (Lysgård, S.: *Arbeiderkollektivet*, Oslo, 1961). The extent to which the concept covers other types of work places: e.g. whether the building gang, which is a formalised part of the organisation and is part of the wages and agreement system, is also a workers' collective in this sense is a matter of dispute.

5. A more coherent presentation and reason for paying attention to precisely these points is to be found in Henning Salling Olesen's article entitled "Bevægelsen i fagbevægelsen - og hele livet!" [Motion in the trade union movement - and in the whole of life!] in *Social Kritik* nr. 8, 1990, which also contains a number of other contributions to this basic discussion. Cf. Oskar Negt: *Die Herausforderung der Gewerkschaften*, Campus 1989, and *Zukunft der Arbeit*, Documentation for IG Metall's conference on the future in 1989, and also Hoffmann, Jürgen et al: *Jenseits der Beschlußlage, Gewerkschaft als Zukunftswerkstatt*, Bund Verlag, Nördlingen 1990.

6. Cf. a large-scale investigation of the development of new environments in Germany. Cf. M. Vester & H. Geiling: *Die Spitze eines gesellschaftlichen Eisbergs: Sozialstrukturwandel und neue soziale Milieus*, in R. Roth et al, 1991. Cf. also Alheit/Vester, 1993.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC Educational Resources Information Center

CE 083 178

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Organized and Legionaires or Life Artists. The Shop Steward	
Author(s): SOMMER, F. - ANDERSEN, A.S. - SALLING OLESEN, H.	
Corporate Source: "Adult Education and the Labour Market" Vol 2. ROSKILDE UNIV, ADULT ED. RESEARCH GROUP	Publication Date: 1996

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☒

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature:	Printed Name/Position/Title: PROF HENNING SALLING OLESEN
Organization/Address:	Telephone: +45-46742672 FAX: +45-46743070
	E-Mail Address: HSO@RUC.DK Date: 7/7-03

(Over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:	ROSKILDE UNIV, AD. EDUC. RES. GROUP
Address:	PAVILLON 10 RUC, P.O.BOX 260, DK-4000 ROSKILDE
Price:	APPROX 10 US $ + POSTAGE

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:	
Address:	

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse: **Cheryl Grossman**
Processing Coordinator
ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to: